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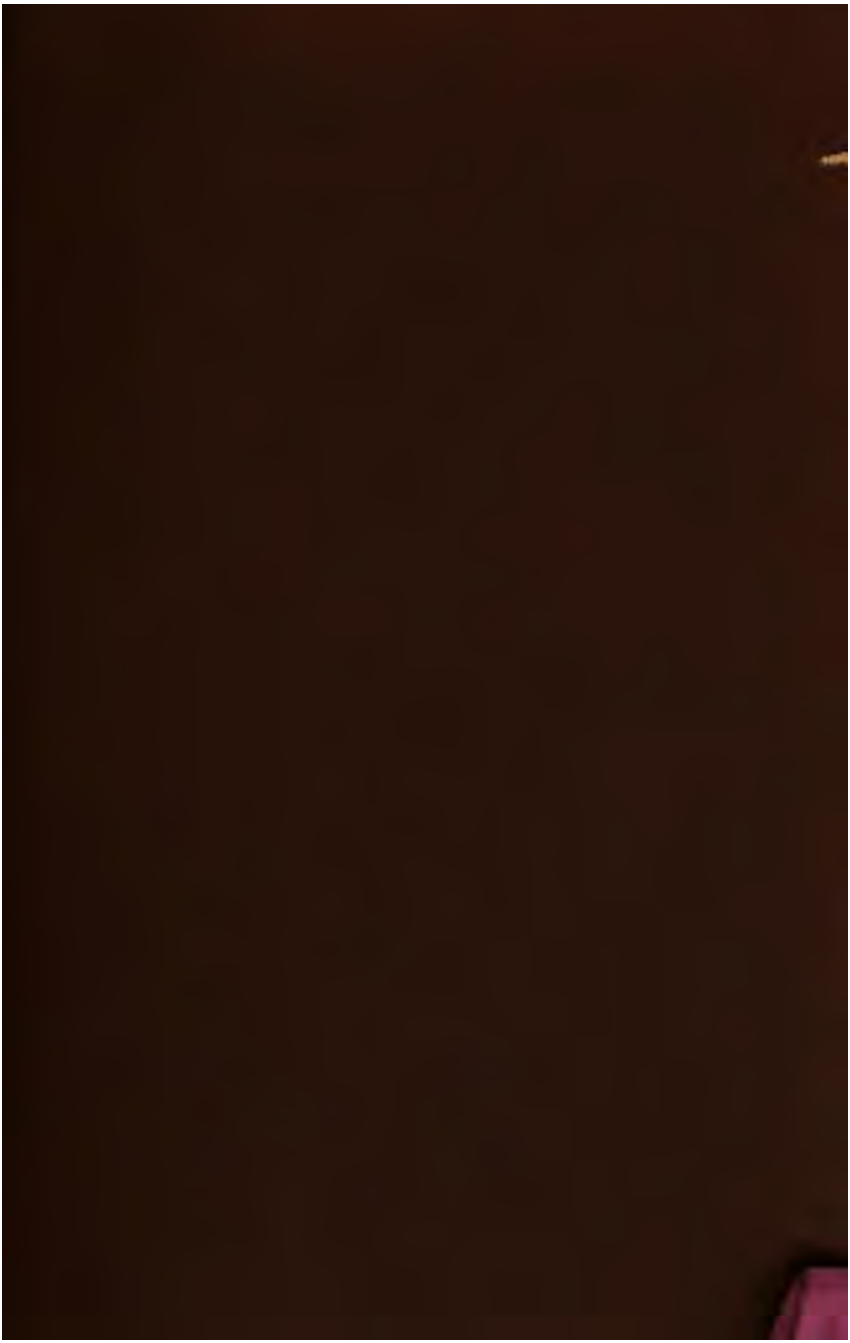

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826

"EARLY, bright, transient as the morning dew,
She sparkled, was exhaled, and went to heaven."

YOUNG.

FEB'36

PART FIRST.

PART FIRST.

Downy vales and distant mountains;
Clambering vines and clustering roses;
Sylvan grottos near old fountains;
Landscapes, where the soul reposes—
Stay awhile!
Be like visions in the sunset,
Seen from an Ægean isle.

Broken arch and crumbling column;
Mossy gates of castles hoary;
Mouldering temples, sad and solemn;
Weirdly dreamful of old story—
Stay awhile!
Blend the mind in olden glory,
Peaceful as a Sabbath smile.

Lingering footsteps, echoing lonely;
Eyes pathetic, glancing ever
On one pictured maiden only,
Meekly peerless, fading never—
Stay awhile!
Number with me holy annals;
From the Past, the Past beguile.

Fair is the scene—surpassing fair—
Where Densor's noble mansion stands
Serene in grandeur; and the air
Is like the balm of eastern lands,
And winnowed there by fairy wands.

Fair are the mansion's regal rooms,
And galleries, like enchanted ground,
Where mingled Art the soul illumes—
Where wondrous marbles gaze around
On limners' gems which there abound.

Fair and historic; youth and age
Are impressed o'er its stately pile,
Where many an ancient knight and sage
Looked from its towers, nor saw meanwhile
The courts which now in beauty smile.

Yet fairer still—so others tell
Of other days—and loved of all
Was she, whose silenced marriage-bell
There long time moaned through cot and hall,
Like some wild, wind-swept waterfall.

Once, as I loitered pensively
Where lie the dead of Densor's vale,
The aged steward came to me
With looks and words all kind and hale,
And told anon her gentle tale.

Approaching twilight brought the hour
That seems so long and lustrous there;
It came with balmy, blending power,
And tinged with rich and reverent air
The somber, neighboring place of prayer.

Sweet thoughts of other days were seen
To kindle in the old man's eye;
And whilst he spake of what had been,
Deep in his tones did pathos lie,
As though he felt his dear ones nigh.

"Oft in these climes," he said, "is found
Midst lowlier flowers some white moss-rose,
Which perfumes all the air around,
And to the mind a sense bestows
Of love and beauty in repose.

"So she, whose form yon tomb enshrouds,
Gave sweetness to this ancient vale,
O'er which the morn and evening clouds
Appear to linger as they sail,
And mutely cry, 'All hail! all hail!'

"And though she claimed no noble line,
Yet well-born ancestry had she:
Her father was a meek divine,
Who early died, and ne'er did see
His child, the future Margaree.

"And long his sires were marked and high,—
E'en as he stood in classic halls,—
Till all their fortunes went awry:
Then from those peaceful, hoary walls
Grim ruin drew him near its thralls.

"But he had yearned to teach the way
To Christ and heaven; and sought it now.
His Master's yoke upon him lay;
He took and loved th' evangel's vow,
With chastened ardor on his brow.

"Meanwhile, impassioned cares he knew;
For plighted troth had triumphed long
Between him and a maiden true;
And now, amidst Misfortune's throng,
He deemed that dear affiance wrong.

"Howbeit, her loyal heart forbade
All thoughts of change—or loved him more.
His silence pained her; till, afraid
And grieved, he sang this tender lore,
Her happier moments to restore:

"Thy brain, where truths and beauties live,
From pain I'd shield, not pain would give,
My gentle girl.
I would not clasp with reckless hand
The blushing rose in thy hand,
Nor mar thy joys: but all expand,
My gentle girl!

"Chide not my silence, lady fair:
My bosom speaks, for thou art there.
My gentle girl!
An unseen presence with his dart
Has graved thy image in my heart,
And made thee of myself a part,
My gentle girl!

"My soul, though sometimes tossed and driven,
Still lives for thee, as thine for heaven,
My gentle girl!
And thou, in thy calm goodness blest,
Wilt soothe the mind erewhile distrest,
And lead me more to perfect rest,
My gentle girl!

"O gravest office known of men,
To show where seeming gains are loss;
To bring dead souls to life again
Before the wonders of the cross!—
Where other glories fade as dross.

"And now the village pastor's round
He took through Densor's wide domain;
His presence in each home was found
And welcomed; and the sacred strain
He taught, his life taught o'er again.

"Anon, yon antique parsonage
Received his gentle girl, his bride;
Where they might dwell from youth to age;
But ah! e'en 'midst rejoicings wide,
His mission ended, and he died.

"Thence tenderest kindness gathered round
The trembling widow young and lone;
Whose anguish breathed no voice or sound;
But sweetly won that solemn tone
Which comes from opening heaven alone.

"So time passed by; but when the snows
And storms of winter vexed the air,
She found her long and blest repose;
And Margaree, her infant fair,
Was welcomed to the mansion there.

"And there through happiest years she bloomed,
Adorned, accomplished, as their own:
Saw other vales and hills that loomed
In far-off climes; till—woman grown—
As of their lineage she was known.

"Through old baronial halls she moved
With winsome presence, loved of all;
An azure charm around her roved—
A beauty, like th' auroral call
To listening birds when leaflets fall.

"When mystic mistletoe was hung;
When log of Yule, and wassail-bowl,
And festive mirth, and Christmas song,
Gave cheer and pathos to the soul,—
She roamed like radiance through the whole.

"In oaken rooms, where relics rare
And suits of armor hang beside
Their wearers' full-length portraits there,
As once they looked in jousts of pride,
Or in old wars the foe defied,—

"There have I seen in days gone by
The young and beauteous Margaree
Survey the scenes with thoughtful eye,
And wistfully inquire of me
More of each relic's history.

"That battle-axe through Crecy passed;
That riven helmet took its blow
In Agincourt,—the warrior's last,
Which laid him, fiercely fighting, low,
Whilst instant vengeance smote his foe.

"Those faded pennons graced the train
Of Henry in the field of gold;
And regal trophies, from the reign
And strife of 'rival roses,' told
What lore those heirlooms could unfold.

"Alas! I walk those mansions now,
As in my office walk I may;
And thoughts of her my spirits bow,
Or sometimes in the moon's pale ray
They brighten midnight to mid-day.

"Soon worthiest suitors sought her hand,
Until a rumor told that one—
A youthful ruler of the land—
Had her fond heart and promise won:
And now, with every morning sun,

"Glad sounds of preparation rose,
And hailed the lover's bridal day;
Howbeit our hearts forgot repose,
When here he came, in joy's array,
To take fair Margaree away.

"Yet, o'er the lawn and old oak shade,
And o'er the bounteous feast and cheer,
On lines of rural tables laid,
With games and pastimes gathering near,—
Beyond all these, in prospect clear,

"The lovers gazed, so blest and true,
That in new life, through vistas fair,
They saw all Eden, in the view
Of that dear home they soon would share,
In flowery meads embosomed there.

"Could blessedness like this remain,
So full, so crowned of earth and heaven,
What would the soul aspire to gain
In other worlds? Oh, kindly given,
That oft our fondest joys are riven.

"And yet, how sometimes joys endure!
The lovers heard a yeoman sing
One eventide, in woods obscure;
And each did smile and closer cling,
As thus he made the welkin ring:

"I met my dear Freena at dawning of day,
But changed unto me was her word and her way;
'Why, Freena,' I cried, 'shall I hie from your view?'
She sadly replied, 'I don't care if you do.'

"'Nay, come to me, dearest! What is it has stirred
The plumage and voice of my sweet little bird?
Last night I had dreams, and they all were of you;
But these I'll conceal'—'I don't care if you do.'

"'Why, Freena, my Freena, the stars are all fair,
Though hidden by vapors that sail in the air;
And thou in thy clouds art in loveliness true;—
I'll love thee the more'—'I don't care if you do.'

"'I saw on my way two young lambkins at play,
As down o'er the meadows and streams they did stray;
And oh, how they loved!—just as I love you;
Shall I take you to see?'—'I don't care if you do.'

"'And I saw the old church, whose vane in the sky
Was beckoning to me; and my heart did reply,
"I come, soon I come, with my Freena so true;"
Oh, go with me, Freene!'—'I don't care if I do.'

"And thus were united my Freena and I;
Nor birds when their songs fill the halls of the sky,
Nor lambkins at play, are more happy and true;—
And we smile as we say,—'I don't care if you do.'"

PART SECOND.

PART SECOND.

Ah! are there magi in the mind?
That mass of spirit, does it hold
Council with spirits more refined,
As with their awful scrolls unrolled
They darkly read, "Beware! Behold!"

No, 'tis not magi; winds divine
Waft glimpses from events to be,
And show of joy the bright ensign,
Or wave the gloomy heraldry
Of woes, from which we cannot flee.

And now full well fair Margaree knew
How all conspired to make her blest.
On mighty wings the moments flew,
And calmed each impulse of unrest
That came and passed, a lonely guest.

But soon more thronging tumults came;
Soon prescience and mysterious fear.
She forward looked, but not the same;
She saw a shadowy hand appear
And draw sepulchral portals near.

Majestic piles in slow decay;
Deserted temples, where of yore
Were solemn pomp and festal day;
Scenes where dumb stillness broodeth o'er
Departed throngs that come no more;

And dim old woods and mountain glooms
Familiar to her spirits grew;
And oft she roamed amidst the tombs,
Or with her lover stood to view
The pensive stars and depths of blue.

Once, on a warm autumnal day,
When orient splendors charmed the air,
They sat embowered alone, away;
And now she told, as if in prayer,
The thoughts that tracked her everywhere.

Far off, beneath a southern sky,
Old Ocean heaved, and sails were seen;
And singing larks ascended high,
And hung like tuneful specks between
The rainbow-clouds that crowned the scene.

"Seest thou," she said, and sadly smiled,
"How all things to successors bend?
Methinks these leaves sing dirges wild,
As now a listening ear I lend,
And feel the cadence of their end.

"Thy generous nature will not chide
Thoughts which the world would weakness deem;
Thou lovest me, and by thy side—
Forgetful of my God—I seem
Lost in a too delicious dream.

"Yet, think thou, what if 'twere decreed
That one on earth we may not be?
Perhaps thy heart or mine must bleed:
'Twill be for good—not now to see,
But known through all eternity.

"To sow in tears, and reap in joy;
To take the cross, and find the crown:
This, this our souls may well employ;
But yet I shrink as from its frown,
Whilst tenderest mercy lays me down;

"Lays me in shades, from which are seen
The wings, indeed, of brighter day:
But seas of distance intervene;
We wander towards a twilight gray,
We sunder in the mists away.

"Oh, sorrows come! Too well I feel
Their heralds have already come:
We know not what our thoughts reveal!
I look, but find no marriage plume;
I sink beneath a cypress gloom."

"Why speaks my Margaree thus?" he cried.
"Where is thy wonted spirit?—where
The sunshine of my beauteous bride?
Oh, let not fears thy soul ensnare,
Nor strew thy orange flowers in air!

"Come, let us climb yon mountain-brow;
There winds of heaven will bring thee calm,
And strength shall come,—so absent now,—
And every breeze will chant a psalm,
And kiss thy cheek, and own it balm."

"Ah! let us stay. My joys," she sighed,
"And fears still come; and well I know
That bliss and bane are oft allied;
And my cup fills; my joys o'erflow;
And wake presaging signs of wo.

"For lo! I seem constrained to hold
Converse with friends beyond the sky.
In morning's hovering clouds of gold
They seem to come; then grouping, fly,
And beckon me up—up on high.

"And still where lines of portraits bound
Our echoing halls, I pace and see
Each dusky visage watch me round;
Their eager eyes converge on me,
Till all seems lost but heaven and thee.

"And as heaven's volume claims my care,
Its pages all aglow I find;
And solemn halos tremble where
It pleads, with warnings intertwined,
'Set not on earthly things thy mind.'

"In dreams I walked, beneath the moon,
Yon churchyard; and a vision near
Murmured, 'Prepare thyself, for soon,
Prepared—by all to souls most dear—
Or unprepared, thou must come here.'

"The waning leaves, and wending days,
And wailing winds, admonish me.
My soul meanders in the maze
Of fears that thine I may not be:
Oh, come no thoughts of change to thee!"

PART THIRD.

PART THIRD.

'Tis not time for leaflet falling
O'er old mansions ancestorial;
Grasses green are yet enthralling
Every churchyard's gray memorial—
Wait awhile!
Wait ye chanting winds of Autumn;
Bring not yet a wintry spoil.

Let not life too early languish;
Let not rosy scenes be blighted;
Come not now, oh, pain and anguish!
Startled terrors, hopes benighted—
Wait awhile!
See! a bridal train is coming
To the old cathedral pile.

But lo! Suddenly it lingers—
Halts—recedes; the heavens darken.
Hushed are the glad notes of singers,
And to wailing strains we hearken—
Wait awhile!
Wait, weird shadows, 'tis but noonday;
Let the full meridian smile.

Ere the revolving moon had passed
Within the arc which was to view
Fair Margaree's bridal, storms were cast
Along the hopes her dear ones knew:
Howbeit she more celestial grew.

Oh, solemn period, when the soul,
From heights of Time, looks o'er the Past,
And turns to hear the billows roll,
Like anthems, in the Future vast,
And knows that there 'tis hastening fast.

Pale on her bed she lapsed away
Swiftly, yet with unclouded mind;
And dawnings of immortal day
Threw mundane grandeurs all behind,
As life with higher Life entwined.

She heard transcending voices call
From bending worlds more bright than this;
She saw the pearly gate and wall—
The crystal domes and homes of bliss—
The universe metropolis.

And now there came across her thought
A gentle presence, gliding there
From years that she remembered not.
We heard her breathe, in sleep or prayer,
"Oh, mother, take me to your care."

Meanwhile her lover,—like the man
Who sees his priceless argosy
Wrecked near his home,—aghast, and wan,
And lost, he wandered silently,
As though to shun his misery.

So the poor, banished exile long
Turns from cold landscapes, dim and strange,
Where yet his life must pass; the throng
Of raptures gone, his thoughts derange,
And hide awhile the dreary change.

Ah, with what looks of tenderness
She held him near her! "Grief is thine,
And grief is mine o'er thy distress;
Yet canst thou not," she said, "resign
Thy human will to will Divine?

"Thy Margaree must go indeed
To other scenes, and thou wilt know
The loneliness of hearts that bleed;
Yet, then, forget not in thy wo
Thy God will never from thee go.

"Live thou for Him. So shalt thou find
Thy peace will like a river be;
And, perhaps, in the deep Future shrined
There is a home for thee and me:
A bliss which even now I see.

"My goal is near,—near; where art thou?
I enter waters dark and cold;
Dear Saviour, oh, be with me now!
He comes! The waves away are rolled:
My Shepherd leads me to his fold."

Just on the marge where Autumn meets
Old Winter, and resigns to him
The rolling months,—and Winter greets
The rustling leaves,—a specter dim
Came, like a silent seraphim,

And touched pale Margaree as she lay;
And whilst the sun sank from the sky,
On twilight airs she passed away.
Then darkness came, and winds that sigh,
And gloom and grief to every eye.

Wealth which no boundary knew was there;
Love, skill, and grandeur wooed her stay;
But all were light as summer air;
And as her spirit winged away,
They learned how frail, how vain are they.

Upon the appointed bridal morn
No marriage peal rang through the air:
One solemn bell gave sounds forlorn—
Long, muffled sounds—as friends did bear
Their Margaret to the churchyard there.

They came from all the region round,
And mourned the loved and loving one;
And thus their words grew more profound:
"It must be blest where she has gone;
It must be glory she has won."

Old elms and oaks strewed thick and fast
Dead foliage round her funeral train:
And whilst we stood in numbers vast,
We heard afar the roaring main
And gathering storms of night again.

Careering clouds rose from the waves,
Like startled armies roused from rest;
Yet gilding sunbeams bathed the graves,
And seemed to lead along the west
Through gorgeous skies to kingdoms blest.

We left her where the ivied tower
Seems ever somber watch to keep
O'er all its tombs; where rank and power
Calmly with humble yeomen sleep,
And hearts alike o'er either weep.

There nevermore the Sabbath breeze
On hallowed airs her hymnings bore;
And midst responsive litanies,
Wherein her soul was wont to soar,
We heard her gentle voice no more.

When to the poor afflictions came,
No more she cheered them, morn or even;
No more they heard her breathe the Name,—
"Above all names in earth or heaven,"—
And tell of joys and sins forgiven.

Fair virgin bands long strewed her grave
With flowers, that seemed like them to grieve.
Time passed; and still her story gave
A charm to many a winter's eve,
Which even now I lingering leave.

And still, through yonder stately pile,
Whilst strains of worship rise and fall,
The storied windows tint each aisle,
And robe a tablet on the wall,
That tells her name, her worth to all.

And he, her mourning lover, he
Went forth to honors large and high,
But ne'er forgot his Margaree;
And when full many years went by,
He sang this song with tear-filled eye:

"I see thee still, as in a dream,
Margaree.
I am changed, but thou dost seem
The same to me,—
The same sweet being, bright and fair,
With beaming eyes and auburn hair,
That once did my young heart ensnare,
Margaree.

"For pure, primeval charms were thine,
Margaree,
Expressing innocence divine
So beauteously,

That other maidens loved to bear
Garlands to thee of flowerets rare,
And owned thee fairest of the fair,
Margaree.

"Clear, wandering waters, balmy gales,
Margaree;
Calm, moonlight walks; and tender tales
I told to thee.
These trooping to my mind return;
My fancies glow and feelings yearn:
'Tis o'er! and I again do mourn,
Margaree.

"Thou wast a flower that faded soon,
Margaree;
A star, that waned before night's noon
Did come to thee.
Admiring eyes were strained to know
The heavenly light thou didst bestow,
And wept that thou so soon must go,
Margaree.

42128B

"I will not ask why wert thou born,
Margaree?
Why from our zenith thou didst turn,
And soaring flee?
I wait to know, as I am known,
Wherefore, when heaven on earth was shown,
Even then the angels took their own
Margaree?

"Yet thou didst leave with lingering pace,
Margaree;
Death warned thee to his cold embrace,
And whispered thee,
That though our hopes were firm and high,
And health encharmed thy form and eye,
Still change, some solemn change was nigh,
Margaree.

"With thee the dead did converse hold,
Margaree,
In musings, which thou sometimes told
In tears to me.

Ancestral portraits beckoning seemed;
Refulgent choirs around thee streamed;
Till plains of heaven upon thee gleamed,
Margaree.

"Pale, withered leaflets sought the ground,
Margaree,
And wheeled in circles round and round
All mournfully;
The ivy darkened on the wall;
Birds heard a distant summer-call,
And flew, like thee, at Autumn fall,
Margaree.

"Joys are now thine beyond compare,
Margaree.
Thy harp and song ascend in air
Where angels be;

Thy guileless heart, and thoughtful brow,
And frequent orisons, which thou
Didst love, receive rich guerdon now,
Margaree.

"I still remain, and cares are mine,
Margaree;
Yet, as I weakly would repine,
I think of thee.
Then halcyon scenes we trod of yore,
Thoughts that with young romance ran o'er,
And all blest things thou dost restore,
Margaree.

"Yes, for a moment all returns,
Margaree;
Again young love triumphant burns,—
My love for thee.
And still that Past my soul enthralls;
I stand like one in haunted halls,
Where more than echoes walk the walls,
Margaree.

"Oh, withered joys! Where shall I find
Margaree,
Those choral raptures of the mind
I knew with thee?

High places claim me as their own,
In circling splendors I am known,
Yet inly sigh, 'Alone! alone!'
Margaree.

"Ah, leave me never! Shouldst thou go,
Margaree,
The death in life I'd ever know;
I could not see
Ethereal skies or Eden bowers.
The soul, benumbed in all its powers,
Would droop away through days and hours,
Margaree.

"Thou wilt not leave me. Thou wilt come,
Margaree.
Yet oft from thy resplendent home,
Where angels be,
I'll feel thee near, with guardian care,
Like some low, blest, adoring prayer,
That soars in light and draws me there,
Margaree."

"Farewell my theme!" the old man cried:
"The sun and evening star sink low.
Methinks thy patience long is tried;
Yet, as thy footsteps homeward go,
And ere in dreams thy fancies flow,

"Think thou 'tis well that sometimes here
The meekly good and blest we see;
And when thy days be dark and drear,
Still think what light shall always be
For souls that love like Margaree."